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TAGS: PREL UNSC PHUM PBTS KPAO VI FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH MFA: GIVE US TIME ON KOSOVO; VETO IS THE WORST CASE SCENARIO

REF: JUNE 8 PARIS POINTS

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Hours before President Sarkozy announced his proposal at the G-8 to delay a Kosovo final status UNSCR for six months while the parties could continue discussions (reftel), MFA Cabinet Advisor for the Balkans and Russia, Isabelle Dumont, told us on June 7 that FM Kouchner wanted more time to personally engage on the Kosovo final status issue. Kouchner intends to visit Belgrade and Pristina and wanted the opportunity to discuss options with the parties, particularly the Serbs, lest there be a Russian veto in the UN Security Council. Dumont stressed that France would find it extremely difficult to consider the recognition of an independent Kosovo without a UNSCR for legal cover; it would split the quint and the EU. (NOTE: Sarkozy's G8 proposal included the condition that absent an accord by the parties, Ahtisaari's plan go into effect after the six month delay and called on President Putin to recognize the inevitable independence of Kosovo-- language used for the first time by a high ranking French official. END NOTE) END SUMMARY

MORE TIME, PLEASE

¶2. (C) Isabelle Dumont, MFA Cabinet Advisor for the Balkans, Russia, the Caucasus, OSCE, Central Asia, and the FSU countries, told poloff on June 7 -- only hours before President Sarkozy's G8 proposal for a six month delay on Kosovo final status discussions -- that FM Kouchner wanted more time to engage with the Serbs and Kosovars in the hope of finding some common ground on a Kosovo final status agreement. Dumont acknowledged that a settlement did not appear likely and noted that Kouchner was not naive about the possibilities, but did want time to at least "try." She agreed with poloff's assertion that the parties had clearly and consistently demonstrated that there was no agreement to be found, but was less willing to admit that a delay might serve to exacerbate tensions both between the parties, as well as inside their respective territories.

VETO IS THE WORST CASE SCENARIO

¶3. (C) A Russian veto, Dumont said, would divide the quint and the EU, immediately. Without what the GOF considers a legal basis (i.e. a UNSCR), France would find it extremely difficult to recognize an independent Kosovo. Even if French authorities thought recognition was the most viable option,

she said, the GOF would not likely recognize Kosovo if some EU members objected. Those objections, Dumont added, were a near certainty at this point. Kouchner, she said, thought this was clearly the worst case scenario, leaving France with a legally impossible situation.

PLANS B AND C ?

¶4. (C) Dumont said she was spending most of her time working on plans B and C. Plan B-- the optimistic alternative-- was a face-saving proposal for Russia that would allow the parties to return to a dialogue for a year or less. The idea, she said, would have to include a guarantee that, at the end of said time period, and absent an agreed settlement between the parties, the UN Ahtisaari plan would automatically take effect. Dumont hoped that Russia could see this as a political win. Plan C, Dumont explained, would be the adoption of a technical UNSCR that would mention neither independence and the Ahtisaari plan nor UNSCR 1244. (Legal experts at the MFA were still discussing implications for 1244.) The idea would be to authorize and provide a legal framework for the proposed ESDP and ICO missions, as well as for KFOR. Plan C avoided a veto and assumed that Putin continued his intransigence in which case the international community needed to provide some legal framework for its continued presence in Kosovo.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) Sarkozy's proposal for a six month delay of a UNSCR on
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Kosovo final status (see reftel) appears to be in line with Dumont's "optimistic" plan B. It was unclear, however, from Sarkozy's public announcement of the proposal, whether his plan foresaw specific guarantees from the Russians about the status of Kosovo after the six month delay (i.e. the automatic activation of the Ahtisaari plan). Sarkozy does not appear to have strayed from the quint's conviction that independence is the only possible outcome. His statement calling on Putin to recognize the inevitable independence of Kosovo was a first for a high level French official. We should encourage the French to continue to use similar language as we move forward.

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